

Dr. D. F. WRIGHT, Editor.

TERMS: \$2.00 IN ADVANCE.

CLARKSVILLE: 11 MAY 13, 1876.

SALUTATORY.

After a long retirement from editorial duties, I find myself most unexpectedly at the editorial desk again. A very few days ago, a state of seclusion, not only from such duties but from all occupations likely to bring my name before the public, was not only my apparent destiny but my deliberate choice.

Fifteen years ago I was editorially engaged in the fiercest political controversy which has ever inflamed this country, and perhaps the tragic termination of that controversy has, more than anything else, contributed to produce that indisposition to any intervention in public affairs which has been the instinct of my later years.

By the flattering invitation of the proprietors of this paper I find myself called upon to take part in another controversy. I have accepted the invitation, not without shrinking, not without misgivings at breaking the long rest which has followed the era of civil war.

But my reluctance has been overcome by my convictions of the momentary importance of the new controversy in which the country is now engaged, both in State and Federal politics; and the flattering opinion expressed by so many of my friends that I could contribute something by my pen to the prevalence of right over wrong in this new phase of party contest, has decided my course, and it is only now left for me to define my position in reference to the political questions at this time under debate.

Before doing so I feel that I should apologize for the apparent egotism of the above personal explanations. I thought them indispensable in this first appeal to the public, but promise that after the present number they shall not be repeated, and even now in commencing my programme of political definition will retire behind the disguise of the first person plural.

In taking the position we expect to occupy both in Federal and State politics it would be sufficient to say that we endorse heart and soul the principles advocated with so much ability by our lamented predecessor, Mr. R. W. THOMAS, whose name we cannot mention without a tribute of veneration and regret. This, we say would be a sufficient avowal, but that, since the time when his invaluable aid was withdrawn from this journal, first by sickness and afterwards by death, the specific forms in which the great struggle has to develop itself have become more definite, the opposing forces are deploying into line, and taking up their positions in a manner which calls for a corresponding marshaling of our own forces in new forms and in more definite order, we are now enabled to foresee where the stress of the battle will concentrate and measurably what will be the strategy of the enemy: So that even had our illustrious predecessor survived, a new manifesto would have shortly been called for, and that manifesto we now proceed to make, despite conscious of our disadvantage in taking up the lance which has fallen from the hands of so distinguished a champion.

It is a curious coincidence that in both State and Federal politics we have the same lesson to enforce, the same delinquency to denounce. In our Federal relations we have to enforce a strict and now unwonted integrity in the transaction of public business, and to denounce corruption and peculation, and in State affairs the programme is precisely the same. At Washington men have gone into public life for the purpose of private peculation, and in Tennessee men are advocating public peculation as a means of their private enrichment, but they do not make the same difference as we do: ours is very simple—beat the Radicals and establish a Democratic government and all will be well. Men's minds in the North do not work quite so directly as this; it is no doubt true that a great many votes which have hitherto sustained the Republican party, will, in all probability, be given to a well chosen Democratic candidate; but even those, and still more so the many who still hope to carry out the policy of the Republican party without its corruption, demand something more, and that is security for the future. Men in the North do not think as we do that a Democratic government is necessarily an honest one; indeed even here we frequently hear shrewd misgivings expressed and apprehensions that, at least with some of our Democratic orators, their zeal is stimulated by their appetite for some of the very splendid pickings now enjoyed by their antagonists. Men demand not only denunciation of the past but security for the future. And our Democratic politicians must bend their minds to this subject and not only make known their plans and remedies, but pledge themselves to make them the leading object of their legislative procedure should they ever obtain legislative pre-eminence. To put all this in plain language our Democratic politicians must not only promise not to steal, but to make stealing impossible.

What is to be the nature of the legislation which is to effect this is a question which cannot be discussed in this article but it will be a topic of serious investigation in our future columns. We can here only indicate that its basis will have to be the practical divorce of administrative

service from party subversion. It must, and we believe it can be made independent of party control. This, together with the substitution of some prompter and more efficient tribunal for dealing with official delinquency, than impeachment before the Senate, will probably be the measures on which will be concentrated the efforts of those who are in earnest for the promotion of administrative reformation and especially incumbent on the Democratic party to effect this reform, for (we say it with shame being an old Democrat ourselves) it was in the flush days of Democracy and within its ranks that originated the cardinal error which has been so fruitful a source of corruption—the Jacksonian maxim: "To the victor belong the spoils."

Without further details on this head we proceed to take up our position in reference to the State politics of Tennessee.

Here the antagonists we have to deal with are those who propose that the State itself should commit the same crime as we are denouncing in individual politicians in Washington—it is proposed that the State should commit a shameless, wholesale robbery upon the capitalists whose money has built her railroads, &c. Our war then is with repudiation. This is the question which will evidently rank all others in our coming State elections. Its humiliating and mortifying to one who takes pride in the honor of his State that this should be the all absorbing controversy, that there should be any controversy about it. And there would not be if there were no repudiators but those who plainly and shamelessly avow their purpose. But there are plenty of repudiators who refuse to show their hand, some even who vigorously deny the imputation and even denounce repudiation. So far as at present discernible, these repudiators of diverse character may be resolved into three classes which we propose now to define—more than definition we cannot at present accord them.

First comes the repudiator pure and simple, unblushing and avowed. Him we do not at present consider dangerous, he has not yet become sufficiently respectable, we therefore drop him for the present; the others are busy in preparing the way for him.

Next comes the repudiator who is represented by the man who shaves his own notes, and is rather in dispute with those with whom he deals, for it is a necessity of his way of doing business that he must first run down his own credit, and then traffic in his own discredit: after making up to his creditor that he is very bad pay, he waits awhile and then asks him how much less his due he will take rather than lose the whole deal. In public business the representative of this honest gentleman is now engaged in the first part of this process—he is running down to the best of his ability the credit of the State, and meantime professes to be waiting for the bondholder to propose a compromise and talks with an air of injured innocence because he does not come forward quicker. He differs from the first sort in proposing to steal a part only instead of the whole—or at least a part at a time; even if the bondholders could be expected to propose an abatement they would still be told to wait, and further and further abatement looked for till all was gone.

Lastly comes the man who is waiting for something to turn up—for better times—he is no repudiator, oh no! He scorns the imputation, but he is very hard and we can't stand any more taxes, and—well it is true the interest is accumulating—but give some more bonds to pay it with, and so he would have us go on getting deeper and deeper in debt until the wolf is become true and the State is in truth bankrupt and repudiation is really inevitable.

Against all these are to be fought the battle of the State's credit, but especially against the last because it is the most insidious, the most dangerous of all.

It only remains for us to solicit the indulgent consideration of our efforts: we pledge ourselves to the most careful study of the subjects we shall discuss, subjecting all our expressions to the most exacting and serious thought, for, right or wrong, the decision of these questions is of vital moment to the welfare of the State and to that of every citizen in it. Especially we appeal to our confederates of the press; we entreat from them a share of that courteous and respectful consideration which we promise to render in all cases both to those who agree with us and to those who dispute our opinions.

As regards our Clarksville contemporary we have no misgivings, we have too long known and appreciated both as editor and friend the able conductor of the Tobacco Leaf, to doubt that our intercourse as editors will be, as it has been in social life, attended with mutual esteem and forbearance and with the amenities which characterize in all cases the intercourse of gentlemen who respect themselves and one another.

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The Dryer County Progress says of Col. Bailey's speech on State finances, that it is "a masterly exposition of a question which cannot be discussed in this article but it will be a topic of serious investigation in our future columns. We can here only indicate that its basis will have to be the practical divorce of administrative

service from party subversion. It must, and we believe it can be made independent of party control. This, together with the substitution of some prompter and more efficient tribunal for dealing with official delinquency, than impeachment before the Senate, will probably be the measures on which will be concentrated the efforts of those who are in earnest for the promotion of administrative reformation and especially incumbent on the Democratic party to effect this reform, for (we say it with shame being an old Democrat ourselves) it was in the flush days of Democracy and within its ranks that originated the cardinal error which has been so fruitful a source of corruption—the Jacksonian maxim: "To the victor belong the spoils."

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As regards our Clarksville contemporary we have no misgivings, we have too long known and appreciated both as editor and friend the able conductor of the Tobacco Leaf, to doubt that our intercourse as editors will be, as it has been in social life, attended with mutual esteem and forbearance and with the amenities which characterize in all cases the intercourse of gentlemen who respect themselves and one another.

DANIEL F. WRIGHT.

The above had been written before we read the very flattering comments of the Tobacco Leaf; they are much more than compliments, they are the offering of a generous and whole-souled friendship, and we prize them, we hope, with a feeling much higher than that of gratified self-love, with a warm appreciation of the motives which prompted them, and which we know have welled up from the very bottom of Doak's honest heart.

In most of the States there are large deficits arising from the expenditure of Penitentiaries. In New York, the deficit from this cause (which has to be made up by the taxpayers), for the last six years, amounts to six millions of dollars. Our penitentiary pays into the State Treasury, annually, thirty thousand dollars. And yet there are some men in our State made unhappy by our penitentiary lease. It is very sad!

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